



**Continuing  
Professional  
Development**  
for Osteopaths

# Using Patient testimonials

If you use, or are thinking of using, patient testimonials in your advertising or publicity, there are some things you should be aware of

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This case study has been prepared to support osteopaths in relation to communication and consent.



General  
Osteopathic  
Council

Osteopaths, like other healthcare professionals, often make use of patient testimonials in their marketing literature and on their websites. Sometimes, osteopaths with high profile patients such as performers or athletes are featured in articles about their work with such patients. It's worth considering that, although these methods can be very effective in promoting an individual's work or even raising the profile of the profession, there are issues around confidentiality that will always apply. Standard D6 of the Osteopathic Practice Standards states: 'Respect your patients' rights to privacy and confidentiality'. In relation to marketing or publicity, the following should be borne in mind:

Patient confidentiality applies regardless of the background or profile of the individual

All patients are entitled to expect the same standards of confidentiality from you, no matter what their background is.

### **Get consent**

Express consent should be obtained from a patient if it is proposed that a testimonial be used to market your practice in some way, whether or not their identity is revealed. You should be clear about the context in which any such testimonial or reference will be presented, and ensure that the patient consents to this. They should know that while they may withdraw consent in the future, it may not be possible to edit any article they are mentioned in after it has been published.

### **Consent in this area cannot be implied and is not transferable**

If consent is obtained from a patient to refer to them in some way or use a testimonial, you will need to get further consent before doing so in another context. A celebrity patient referring to you in a newspaper article does not mean that you are then free to promote the fact that you treat them, without their approval. Particular care is also needed when using photographs of high profile patients, which may be subject to copyright. Even if you have consent to name a patient, care should be exercised in relation to any description of their presentation. Being given permission to name a patient is one thing, but you should be careful about revealing any of their medical details without express consent. It would be good practice to share with them any proposed wording before publication.

### **If in doubt, don't do it**

If you have any doubts as to whether consent is required or has been given or not, then check before using any material, or making reference to a patient in a public domain.